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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 103: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/55/3, A/55/74, A/55/139-E/2000/93, A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766; A/C.3/55/L.2; E/2000/9)

Agenda item 104: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons *(continued)* (A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766)

1. **Mr. Effah-Apenteng** (Ghana) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77. He said that the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had revealed that the goals of social development, as envisaged in the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development, remained largely unfulfilled. Indeed, the world social situation had deteriorated, since the number of people living below the poverty line had increased, as had the number of unemployed and underemployed, malnourished children and children out of school, and the number of people who went hungry.

2. The situation in developing countries, especially in Africa, was alarming. High debt-servicing costs, low commodity prices, declining official development assistance, the negative impact of globalization – especially biases in international trading and financial systems – and the digital divide prevented those countries from generating sufficient resources for investment in the social sector. His delegation therefore welcomed the resolution adopted at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly calling for the mobilization of resources for social development through debt relief, equitable commodity prices, restoration of official development assistance and reduction by half by the year 2015 of the numbers of people living in poverty and of the incidence of HIV/AIDS.

3. The Government of Ghana had taken a number of initiatives to achieve the objectives of the Copenhagen Summit. Since transparency in governance was essential for creating an enabling environment for economic and social development, the Government had established a Serious Fraud Office to eradicate corruption and ensure transparency in the functioning of government. The main focus of the policy on good governance was participation in all in the country's decision-making and development through district assemblies, which were the bedrock of the country's system of decentralization. Projects of the district assemblies were financed by the Common Fund, 20 per cent of which was set aside for lines of credit to promote employment opportunities by helping the poor to establish their own enterprises.

4. Since real empowerment came through education, the Government had established free compulsory and universal basic education, an adult-literacy programme and a girls' education unit. It had thereby increased school enrolment from 76 per cent in 1994/95 to 78.4 per cent in 1998/99. However, a gender gap in school enrolment and retention persisted. To remedy that situation, the Government had put in place programmes to increase the enrolment and retention of girls at school, and a scholarship scheme for needy girls.

5. His delegation commended the Secretary-General for his report on follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons (A/55/167) and, in particular, the inclusion of a mention of the first meeting of the Technical Committee for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in 2002. Ghana was encouraged by the proposal that ageing in developing countries should be integrated into the revised Plan of Action on Ageing to be adopted by that Assembly. His delegation expressed its gratitude to the Government of Spain for offering to host the Assembly, and also thanked the Governments of Austria, Germany and the Dominican Republic for offering to host future meetings of the Technical Committee.

6. It was estimated that, in the developing countries, the population aged over 60 would grow from 354 million in 1998 to almost 1.6 billion in 2050. It was therefore imperative to adopt measures to strengthen the capacity of those countries to extend the scope of their social-security system to cover the huge percentage of the population employed in the informal sector.

7. In the developing world, the lack of employment opportunities in rural areas and unrewarding agricultural ventures had forced ever-growing numbers of young people to migrate to the cities. Consequently, family support for the aged constantly diminished,

adversely affecting the patterns of social integration and relationships within the family system. His delegation recommended that the Technical Committee should examine that serious situation and adopt strategies to redress it. As for ageing refugees, the needs and concerns of that vulnerable group should be taken into account in the revised Plan of Action on Ageing. Furthermore, the Technical Committee and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) should adopt concrete guidelines to respond to their needs.

8. He drew attention to the importance of the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes and the Braga Youth Action Plan and encouraged Governments to implement their provisions. He also urged Member States to contribute to the United Nations Youth Fund for the implementation of agreed programmes and mandates. Young people were one of the most productive and important segments of the population, and the Government's youth programme emphasized the provision of quality education and professional training to prepare youth to play an active role in development.

9. Six years after the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994, the international community should examine new developments affecting the family. Problems arising from broken homes, neglect, economic hardship and inter-generational conflict were on the rise everywhere and needed to be addressed by means of strategies based on a fresh assessment of the role of the family as an institution for social stability, care-giving and support. The people of Ghana cherished the family. Accordingly, Ghana had revised legislation on the family in the area of formation and dissolution of families as well as rights of spouses and inheritance.

10. Without international cooperation and assistance, it would be impossible for the developing world to achieve the goals of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. Ghana urged the international community to lend the necessary political will to provide the resources needed to implement the outcome of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and the Millennium Declaration, in order to rid the twenty-first century of poverty and extreme exclusion.

11. **Ms. Zoghbia** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) endorsed the statements made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and by the representative of Benin.

12. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya attached enormous importance to investment in the development of human resources, and allocated substantial resources to the development of infrastructure and health-care services, education and occupational training, enabling it, for example, to reduce illiteracy from 48 per cent in 1984 to 18 per cent in 1997. In addition, the Government had adopted a set of measures emphasizing gender equality, occupational training, participation of women in development and protection of the family as the fundamental nucleus of society. It had adopted a policy aimed at securing the participation of all in profits and production. The economic system was based on the cooperative spirit with a view to eliminating the system of labour in exchange for wages. Consequently, cooperatives played an important role in the country's social development, and in 1999 over 3,000 cooperatives for production and services had been set up. Efforts were also being made to enable workers to become owners of enterprises, in accordance with the objectives of General Assembly resolution 54/123 relating to the role of cooperatives in social development.

13. The Jamahiriya had actively participated in the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly and in preparations for the Copenhagen Summit. In pursuance of the resulting recommendations, it had allocated a large volume of resources to the implementation of important development projects, such as the Great Artificial River project, which formed part of a plan to raise agricultural production, achieve food security and develop water resources. It had also established a broad rural-development programme to promote the creation of family enterprises and the participation of women, as well as the well-being of rural families through productive projects. In addition, it assisted low-income families through public institutions catering to their basic needs. With regard to housing, the Government had established an effective system for enabling all citizens to own their homes, applying the slogan "The home for those who live in it". It had set up an effective social-security system covering all citizens. It provided assistance and benefits to all those needing help, such as children, the disabled, older persons, widows and divorcees, and was seeking to bring about equality of access to such services. The Jamahiriya stressed the

importance of maintaining the momentum generated by the International Year of Older Persons, a very welcome initiative for promoting the role of older people, who were assigned a preponderant place in society in keeping with its religious, moral and cultural values. The Government's concern went further than a mere provision of care to older persons, by seeking to achieve their participation in the country's social and economic development. The Government provided similar assistance for the development of the capacities of youth, seeking to offer them better opportunities for education and employment with a view to their full participation in economic and social development.

14. Since health care was the fundamental right of all people, the Jamahiriya provided free health-care services. To prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, it had allocated abundant resources and had adopted a set of measures and laws. It had also established a national committee to combat AIDS, working with other relevant agencies to inform the population about AIDS and its prevention.

15. Unilateral economic sanctions, and in particular the unjust embargo imposed by the Security Council against the Libyan people, had adversely affected all segments of the population. The freezing of the country's assets had reduced resources for social and economic development. As a result of the sanctions, the country's economic and social situation had deteriorated and unemployment was on the rise. Furthermore, thousands of children and women had died through lack of medicines caused by the sanctions. The Libyan people therefore appealed for a lifting of the sanctions with a view to improving the country's economic and social conditions.

16. The decisions of the South Summit of the Group of 77 included a reference to the problems of Africa and to the proposed solutions, which called for a firm undertaking on the part of the international community. It was necessary to support the efforts of the African countries to establish peace and overcome their economic problems, by reviewing the conditions in which international financial institutions allocated loans, granting their basic products greater access to international markets, and adopting global measures to solve the debt problem. The constructive initiatives of the specialized agencies in the field of social development were commendable, and the United Nations should pursue its efforts to uphold the right of future generations to a better world.

17. **Ms. Joseph** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), noted that the Millennium Declaration had committed the world to creating an environment conducive to development and the elimination of poverty. To that end, CARICOM endorsed General Assembly resolution 54/175 on the right to development.

18. CARICOM eagerly awaited the convening of the United Nations Conference on Financing for Development to discuss the issues affecting social development in the context of globalization and trade liberalization. To achieve those social-development goals in a globalized economy, and to ensure to the safety and security of all people, it was essential to provide them with food, education and health care. In that respect, CARICOM supported the view expressed by the religious and spiritual leaders meeting at the Millennium Peace Summit, who had declared their commitment to promote the equitable distribution of wealth within and among nations, eradicating poverty and reversing the current trend towards a widening gap between rich and poor.

19. Social development was affected by migration. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean had convened an important symposium in San José from 4 to 6 September 2000 on international migration. It had focused on the human dimension and had confirmed that global changes had affected the international economic order and the division of labour, and, as a consequence, had influenced legislative controls on and inducements to the movement of labour across certain national borders. For the Caribbean, migration had unique social effects. In many instances, departures created deficits in human resources, which affected national development. CARICOM had addressed the impact of migration of skilled nationals through the adoption of national legislation for the free movement of persons within the Community as an imperative for regional development and integration.

20. CARICOM reiterated its support for the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond (General Assembly resolution 50/81), the Lisbon Declaration on Youth Policies and Programmes adopted by the first World Conference of Ministers Responsible for Youth, and General Assembly resolution 54/120 relating to youth. The implementation of those vital international mandates was critical in setting the stage for the advancement of

youth and strengthening their role in development. Accordingly, CARICOM endorsed the goals of the United Nations Youth Network, which were to enhance awareness of the global situation of youth and recognition of their rights and aspirations, to promote national youth policies, to strengthen the participation of youth in decision-making and to encourage mutual respect, understanding and peace. In cooperation with the international community, CARICOM had developed a number of regional initiatives to integrate the concerns of youth in development. In 1998 and 2000, regional meetings had been held with the title "Caribbean Youth Explosion". The themes included healthy lifestyles, effective participation in democracy and civil society, parliamentary participation, and adolescent sexuality and reproductive-health rights, HIV/AIDS, integration and civil society, and governance and democracy. The recommendations included the fostering of an active role of youth in their own development and the development of their societies, the need to make youth more aware of their rights and responsibilities, and their access to decision-making bodies at the local, regional and international levels. High youth unemployment was a critical issue in the Caribbean. To address that concern, Governments were working on development programmes that linked education and training with the job markets and the new challenges of globalization and technological advances. Education played a central role in increasing the competitiveness of individuals and nations in a rapidly globalizing world. Studies in the Caribbean had shown that education was the variable that most strongly affected income inequality, that there were significant educational gaps between the poorest and richest, and that in some countries of the region, tertiary education reduced the chances of being in poverty by 50 times. Accordingly, quality education designed to meet productive and social needs was crucial to enhancing productivity, well-being and political participation for young people.

21. In keeping with paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons (A/55/167), the Caribbean Charter on Health and Ageing had been launched in Guyana in October 1999. Its guiding principle was a coordinated, systematic approach to ensuring the health and full integration and participation of older persons in Caribbean societies and economies. The major components of the Charter encompassed supportive environments for older persons at home, in the community and in long-term-care facilities; primary health care and health promotion; economic security; and employment and other productive activities for healthy ageing. Ageing of the population in the Caribbean presented a major challenge for social-security systems. As in many other parts of the developing world, the Caribbean had traditionally cared for its elderly population through the family and community network. However, growing economic and social pressures and changes in attitude had weakened the informal social-protection system. The problem had worsened with declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy, especially among women, who depended more on the support of their children. Consequently, the formal social-protection systems must be expanded and strengthened. CARICOM looked forward to addressing those and related issues during the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

22. The situation of disabled people in society required continued and enhanced initiatives to integrate them into society. Since the adoption of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons in 1982, the United Nations had been calling on Governments to redouble their efforts to implement their various mandates in behalf of the disabled. The plans and programmes of action of the various United Nations conferences included measures to deal with the problems of disabled people. The designation of a Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development in 1994 was further evidence of the commitment of the international community to implement the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. At the thirty-eighth session of the Commission, the Special Rapporteur had emphasized the importance of added focus on the needs of persons with developmental and psychiatric disabilities, who were among the most marginalized persons in society. CARICOM noted with satisfaction the focus of UNICEF on the special needs of children with disabilities, the UNHCR initiative to study the impact of armed conflict on children, and the workshop conducted by UNICEF during the World Summit for Social Development on the rights of children with disabilities. The work of the United Nations system on the question of disabilities, such as the *Disability Statistics Database* and the *Disability Statistics Compendium*, was highly useful in assisting Member States in developing programmes and activities for the disabled. Recently, the National Council for the Disabled of Saint Lucia had formally

launched its public-awareness campaign on disabilities as part of a programme funded by the Organization of American States to promote equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. A similar programme aimed at ending exclusion of disabled people had achieved tremendous success in Trinidad and Tobago.

23. The CARICOM States acknowledged the importance of the many international initiatives designed to strengthen the family, including the observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994. It joined with other Member States in expressing concern over the steady decline in contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities. The Family Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development assisted Governments in the development, implementation and evaluation of family-related policies and programmes to carry out the actions called for in the International Year of the Family. It was necessary to improve the information available on the family through research, data collection and collaboration among Governments and research institutions, and to give priority to the building of local capacity and the training of personnel to formulate, monitor and evaluate policies and programmes relating to the family. In the Caribbean, as elsewhere, families had experienced significant pressure resulting from unemployment, poverty, the growing number of female-headed households and other factors. Caribbean Governments had enacted measures to address a myriad of social issues to strengthen the family. CARICOM looked forward to working with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the expansion of programmes on the family that would assist the region in addressing priority issues impacting the family. CARICOM would also participate actively in the preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family to take place in 2004.

24. If the international community was to realize the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development and the five-year review of progress made to implement the Copenhagen Declaration, it must make a concerted effort to ensure that the promise of globalization was translated into the reality of sustained social development for all.

25. **Mr. Monsalve** (Ecuador) said that youth must contribute to the society of today and exercise their rights with conviction and optimism. He urged that means should be found to alleviate the external debt of the developing countries, including the heavily-indebted medium-income countries and those affected by natural disasters; otherwise the excessive burden of the external debt would continue to absorb resources that should be allocated to social development. As implied in the report entitled "2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview" (E/2000/9), there was a long way to go in achieving a just and supportive society that could overcome the new inequalities resulting from globalization. The international community must reverse current trends towards exclusion and marginalization.

26. Following observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999, it was hoped that the holding of the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002 would enable progress to be made in building a society for all ages, since ageing also implied sharing experience, helping in the building of a better future and remaining active and productive for the benefit of the family and the community.

27. He welcomed the report on disabled persons (A/54/388/Add.1) and congratulated the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability on the success of its work and the resulting multiplier effect. He also commended the valuable initiative of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in designing a Web page that provided access to a useful database on international standards for the disabled and an extensive information network on that subject.

28. **Ms. Tunku Nazihah** (Malaysia) associated her delegation with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and said that globalization had increased awareness of the degree of interconnection among countries and the similarity of the challenges they faced in social development. New challenges beyond the capacity of any single country had emerged. It was therefore imperative to enhance international cooperation with a view to achieving social progress, social justice, betterment of the human condition and social integration within a globalizing world.

29. With regard to cooperation at the national level, Malaysia had consistently involved national, regional, international and non-governmental organizations as well as the private sector in its social-development efforts, and encouraged the further involvement of civil

society in order to supplement the Government's efforts.

30. Malaysia was fully aware that it needed to attain both social development and social integration. Thus, its policies sought to incorporate individuals and groups adversely affected by economic growth and modernization and left out of the mainstream of economic and social life, namely, children, youth, people with disabilities, women, the elderly, families and indigenous people. Malaysia viewed social development as a means of creating a society that was democratic, tolerant, caring and progressive and endowed with an economy that was equitable, competitive, dynamic and resilient. Some 42 per cent of the population were under the age of 25 and, with a view to facing the myriad of social problems affecting them, were increasingly being given top priority in policies and programmes.

31. Malaysia's commitment to improving the quality of life of the disabled had been ensured through the signing of the Proclamation on Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region on 16 May 1994. Malaysia had a National Advisory Council, which was drawing up plans of action for the disabled. Legislation was being formulated to protect disabled persons' rights and to prohibit abuse and any form of discrimination. The 1961 Education Act provided for the establishment of special schools for children with disabilities, and in 1995 a Department of Special Education had been set up to focus on children with special needs. The Government was financing community-based rehabilitation programmes and there were also programmes for the training and employment of persons with disabilities, in addition to comprehensive programmes to prevent causes of disability such as blindness and iodine deficiency.

32. The policy on family, enshrined in the national population policy, was aimed at increasing knowledge and practice of a healthy, stable and harmonious family life as part of the main objective of enhancing the situation of the population by strengthening the institution of the family. A national family action plan had been drawn up, based on the proposed guiding principles for a global blueprint for action on families.

33. Planning for the elderly should take cognizance of the need for greater financial and personal independence and a relationship of mutual reliance, rather than dependency. Preparation for the later stages of life was part of Malaysia's economic development policies. Elaborated In conjunction with the International Year of Older Persons, the action plan to implement the national policy for the elderly was primarily aimed at their integration and participation in development. In view of the increasing number of nuclear families and longer life expectancy, steps were being taken to ensure that family ties were maintained and that the family continued to care for the elderly. Since 1992, tax relief had been granted to offspring for the medical expenses of their elderly parents, and medical benefits for public-sector employees had been extended to their parents. With regard to the destitute elderly with no relatives willing to care for them, the Government also provided financial aid and lodging. With the Government's assistance, non-governmental organizations had established 132 homes for the elderly.

34. Her delegation shared the view of the representative of ILO that there was a strong link between the economic and social dimensions of development, and that social development must go hand in hand with economic advances. Achieving that link was a difficult challenge, given the complicating impact of globalization. That goal should guide the work of the Third Committee.

35. **Mr. Lim Jae-hong** (Republic of Korea) said that the most noteworthy of the successes of the 1999 International Year of Older Persons was the way in which the world perceived older persons. They were no longer regarded as a social burden but rather as an indispensable component of social development. Furthermore, the theme of the Year, "A society for all ages", had introduced a sound policy framework to achieve an age-integrated society, and had heightened public awareness of the needs of an ageing society. In addition, at the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly it had been agreed that the full integration and continued participation of older persons in society were essential to development. None of that could have taken place without the efforts of the Government of the Dominican Republic, the expert groups, the United Nations Secretariat and many non-governmental organizations. As indicated in paragraph 4 of the Secretary-General's report on follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons (A/55/167), the theme of a society for all ages implied a holistic approach with greater emphasis on larger-

scale social adjustments and opportunities for older persons. Such a society needed policies and programmes not only to improve the human rights, education and health of older persons but also to create an enabling environment of family and community for a successful old age. At the same time, attention should be given to the more vulnerable groups of older persons, such as those in rural areas, the disabled and women. In 1999 the Republic of Korea had formulated an action plan relating to medium- and long-term development for the health and welfare of the elderly in preparation for an ageing society in the twenty-first century. The plan emphasized the need to enhance the capacities of older persons and to nurture their social interaction at the individual, family and community levels. In that same year the national pension scheme had been extended to virtually all citizens. Although the International Plan of Action on Ageing had made a commendable contribution to policies and perceptions concerning older persons, it needed to be revised so that it better corresponded with the current environment. It should consider national and regional differences and contain policy options for specific situations. The revised Plan should be adopted at the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. Spain was to be commended for offering to host that important event, and the Republic of Korea pledged its active participation both in the Assembly and in the preparations for it. In addition, the database on policies and programmes on ageing would serve as a forum for exchanging information, knowledge and experiences on that subject, and would assist in monitoring the Plan of Action. The momentum built during the International Year should be maintained and further strengthened in an effort to construct a society for all ages characterized by life-long personal development.

36. **Ms. Htay** (Myanmar) observed that not much had been achieved in alleviating poverty, especially in developing countries, since the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. At the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly it had been agreed that, in order to share in the benefits of globalization, the developing countries must enter the global economy. Furthermore, in order to attain the goals of social-development programmes, there must be political stability and economic development.

37. Myanmar had set up a National Committee for Elderly Persons, and the International Day of Older Persons had been observed at the national, state and administrative-division levels. The family traditionally assumed responsibility for the well-being of its older members. Caring for them was also a social and religious obligation on the part of local communities. Charity organizations for the well-being of the aged were operating in various areas of the country with joint funding from public donations and government contributions.

38. Myanmar had co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 52/82 entitled "Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons: towards a society for all in the twenty-first century". In order for disabled persons to participate fully in the life and development of their society in living conditions equal to those of other members, the Department of Social Welfare was implementing measures to that end. It had accorded high priority to many rehabilitation and training programmes for physically handicapped persons.

39. **Ms. Romulus** (Haiti) noted that high hopes for social development and the eradication of poverty had been pinned on the World Summit for Social Development. Many skeptical observers considered, however, that neither the Summit nor the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly nor the Millennium Summit would change in any way the life of the average person, who would continue to face unemployment, poverty, environmental degradation and violation of rights. Various factors continued to impede the pursuit of growth by certain developing countries, which were unable to gain from participation in international trade or to derive much benefit from the increased purchasing power of exporters, since that income would be used primarily to import products manufactured in developed countries. Thus, it was illusory to think that liberalization of trade and of external financing would automatically benefit the poor countries. The capital available in financial markets continued to be concentrated in a handful of countries, owing to their progress in advanced technology. The question of financial resources, whether in the form of official development assistance or direct foreign investment, was of vital importance, since in many countries there were structural limitations on the mobilization of internal resources for social development. That occurred in Haiti, where despite obstacles the authorities were making considerable efforts to apply a policy of social justice for all, and especially the most disadvantaged, and had taken

various measures that were being harmonized with the objectives of the Copenhagen Declaration.

40. Over 2,000 young people had participated in the National Youth Congress organized by the Ministry of Health and Population in July 2000 to consider education in the context of family life, sexuality and reproductive health, and contagious diseases, including AIDS. The Ministry also supported older persons by increasing the staff of residences and the availability of medicines and supplies. In 1999, World Health Day had been dedicated to older persons with the slogan "Let us stay active for a healthy old age".

41. One sphere calling for international solidarity was that of indebtedness, which held back the progress of society. Although the new initiatives were well conceived, the issue should be dealt with at its roots since debt hampered the expansion of markets.

42. **Mr. Valdez Carillo** (Peru) endorsed the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Rio Group. In Peru, efforts had been made for 20 months to ensure that, at its twenty-fourth special session, the General Assembly would endorse the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen in 1995, which should pave the way for continued stability and economic growth, and thus bring about improved living standards for all. Negotiations leading up to the special session had focused on globalization and, although the debate would continue, the existing economic models, institutions and mechanisms must face that new situation. There was a need to define its effects and to allocate the available funds to eradicating poverty. That could be achieved by investing in education, nutrition and health, creating conditions conducive to equality of opportunity, establishing incentives to raise production and productivity; and incorporating a gender perspective in public policies as a means of strengthening the social fabric.

43. It was common knowledge that official development assistance had been markedly declining, while a significant number of developed countries had recorded unprecedented levels of sustained growth in their gross domestic product. That paradox of globalization required that the increasingly scarce resources should be invested efficiently. Poverty affected the majority of countries, but was concentrated in large pockets in various regions of the world. To avoid disparities and lack of equity, it was necessary to determine to which group of people each investment and each project were directed. Thus, priority should be given to verifiable results: if attention was paid only to national indicators which concealed actual poverty levels, the really poor people of the world would suffer. Consequently, it was necessary to draw on the positive experiences of the developing countries themselves in the field of social investment. The availability of resources and the success of poverty-eradication programmes depended not solely on countries' individual efforts but also on the stability of the international financial system, the opening of the industrialized countries' markets and better conditions for servicing the external debt.

44. At the Millennium Summit, Member States had resolved to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income was less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who were unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water. Peru had given priority to those issues during the past 10 years. Between 1991 and 1997, extreme poverty had been cut by more than 12 percentage points, while total poverty had been reduced by almost 7 points. To achieve that result it had invested in education, health and hygiene, sectors which served as a basis for generating employment and incomes, and hence social development. During the same period the scope of primary-health coverage had been doubled from 6 million to 12.4 million effective recipients. School enrolment had been raised from 87.3 per cent to 95.6 per cent between 1993 and 1998, while the coverage achieved by the national electric-power grid had been expanded from 52 per cent to 72 per cent during that period. Those indicators were just an example of the results of a determined social policy achieved within a limited time; it was now necessary to consolidate those actions and ensure that the decisions and ongoing projects were sustainable. It was essential, therefore, to ascertain local views and priorities, and gradually to hand over the administration and management of projects to their beneficiaries so that the latter felt responsible for their future viability. In the coming years, emphasis would have to be placed on the building of consensus within countries regarding policies and measures to be adopted. The ultimate goal would be to improve the quality of life of their inhabitants in the context of a culture of citizen participation, inclusion of vulnerable groups, and respect for people's fundamental rights.

45. **Mr. Al-Rubaie** (Iraq) said that his country's participation in preparations for the Copenhagen Summit and in the Summit itself, as well as in the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, indicated its desire to ensure that human-rights issues were dealt with comprehensively in order to combat poverty, hunger, underdevelopment and unemployment. The principle that social development could be achieved only through international cooperation was not only ethical and social but also economic and political.

46. All peoples had the right to development, but an enormous gap persisted between the developing and the developed countries. That could be ascribed to many factors, such as globalization, the external debt, imbalances in trade relations, and the economic sanctions imposed against the developing countries in the name of the United Nations, regardless of their disastrous effects on the population and national economic life. The Iraqi Government had adopted a series of measures to alleviate poverty and to improve certain social services, as well as to create new job opportunities. However, it had encountered obstacles, especially the unjust economic sanctions that had been in effect since 1991. It should not be forgotten that the military aggression committed by the United States and the United Kingdom had also targeted civilian enterprises and infrastructure destined to meet the daily needs of the citizens. In recent years the living standards of the population had declined from the social, economic, cultural and health standpoints. As a result of the sanctions, the economy had deteriorated, the social well-being of the majority of the population had been affected and the mortality rate had risen. Such consequences had been the subject of various reports prepared by international and humanitarian organizations, a number of non-governmental organizations and various foreign individuals. Furthermore, the depleted uranium used by the aggressor forces during their military operations in 1991 had caused much suffering, impacted the environment and public health, and contaminated the soil, the water and the atmosphere, affecting even future generations.

47. Resolutions establishing economic embargoes largely affected countries of the third world, and especially their civilian populations. However, the Security Council had no intention of respecting the legal principles laid down in the Charter of the United Nations. For 10 years the Council had maintained sanctions against Iraq even though the country had complied with its obligations, a fact which the Council had not even mentioned. The Council had the obligation to act on the basis of humanitarian and human-rights principles. It had neither acknowledged its responsibility nor defended the rights of Iraqi civilians suffering under the sanctions, and that had created a negative image of the Council.

48. In the light of its concern for older persons, the disabled and youth, in 1980 the Government had promulgated a law on social security setting up many centres to satisfy the needs of the disabled and establishing workshops to enhance their integration into society. As to older persons, social work was concentrated on the provision of medical and recreational services. A ministerial committee had been established for their protection, and the International Day of Older Persons was regularly observed. The general embargo had affected the quality of services for such people, making it impossible to cater to their needs, especially with respect to medicines, food, transport and rehabilitation. In 1992 the Government had established a federation provided with all the resources needed to develop the possibilities of youth, including their physical and cultural development. About 100 centres had been set up to facilitate employment for youth during school holidays. The general embargo had also affected youth, since they had been unable to realize their aspirations owing to lack of resources and equipment, and cultural exchanges with their counterparts elsewhere in the world had been severed. The suspension of the unjust embargo was the responsibility of all. A policy which visited hunger and deliberate destruction on the people of Iraq and which ran counter to the most elementary principles of human rights, and in particular the right to life, must be condemned.

49. **Mr. Dahane** (Morocco) said that the increase in life expectancy was perceived as a success of human development because the great strides achieved by medical science had made it possible to eradicate certain diseases and to prevent those which caused premature death, especially in the developing countries. It also imposed new, burdensome requirements in the field of public health and social integration, since the number of older persons was constantly growing. The proclamation of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 with the

theme "A society for all ages" required a global approach: health and well-being were determined at a very early age, on the basis not only of personal decisions but also of rational social policies and support structures.

50. Morocco welcomed the holding of the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002 in Spain and the work carried out by the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations and all the actors in civil society seeking to achieve an integrated and supportive society with permanent structures that strengthened inter-generational links. Because of its deep-rooted traditions and Muslim culture, which conferred on older persons specific functions and prerogatives in society, Morocco granted a high priority to the question of ageing. It was convinced of the importance of the contribution of older people to the equilibrium of society and the education of youth. That conviction had taken shape in a bold national plan of action designed to provide older persons with legal protection, especially for those who lacked funds, medical attention, social protection and recreational services. The aim was to strengthen the traditional systems of family solidarity and to encourage families to care for and support their older members within their communities and groups.

51. **Ms. Pohjankukka** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) warmly welcomed the General Assembly's decision to proclaim the year 2001 the International Year of Volunteers. The Federation had undertaken to participate actively in the celebration of the International Year and encouraged all its societies to observe it in an innovative manner and to join with other agencies and Governments in organizing volunteer work and promoting the culture of volunteer service.

52. Although volunteer work could not replace the formal service-delivery system, it had great impact on the social, political and economic development of society since it helped to integrate people who were marginalized, like older people, youth or disabled persons. Interaction between beneficiaries and volunteers was valuable for both parties, and it was estimated that the economic value of volunteer work amounted in some countries to between 8 and 14 per cent of the gross national product. Although volunteers worked for free, it cost money to organize them. The legal, fiscal and political bases for volunteering were crucial, since volunteer work depended on the general conditions prevailing in the country. At the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, Governments had committed themselves to supporting the millions of volunteers who daily embodied the humanitarian commitment. Furthermore, in adopting the Plan of Action for 2000-2003, States had undertaken to review and where necessary introduce or update legislation so as to facilitate the efficient work of the relevant voluntary organizations.

53. The priority of the African Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies health initiative 2010 was to combat HIV/AIDS. With some 2 million volunteers throughout the continent, the Red Cross/Red Crescent was uniquely placed to address prevention and response at the local level and across national borders. Many of the volunteers were young, which added to the potential for peer education and promotion of health activities at home. A total of 51 national Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies had signed the Ouagadougou Commitment, which had marked the closing of the Fifth Pan-African Conference, held in Burkina Faso from 21 to 25 September 2000. The document called for a massive increase in resources to finance and implement expanded programmes and to address urgently public health and food security in Africa. The recruitment, training and motivation of volunteers would also be further improved. A key element was investing in human resources for supporting the volunteer networks.

54. **Mr. Langmore** (Director, Division for Social Policy and Development), referring to the comments and proposals made during the general debate, which had been characterized by the presence of young delegates, said that in 2001, the International Year of Volunteers, the Commission for Social Development would consider the item in February. In May 2001, the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries would be held in Brussels and the fourth session of the World Youth Forum would be held in Senegal. With regard to cooperatives, he noted that the General Assembly intended to consider guidelines on the subject in 2001. He also mentioned the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children to be held in 2001 and the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

The meeting rose at 5.10 p.m.